The COMPASS

AMERICAN · ASSOCIATION · OF · SOCIAL · WORKERS

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FOOD STAMPS

CAN WE RATE SOCIAL AGENCIES?

PERSONNEL ADJUSTMENTS WITHIN THE AGENCY

PROBLEMS AND TRENDS IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Volume XXI Number 1

APART from discovering what a social agency must be and do to pass muster as a social agency, there is the problem of inventing the practical devices by which its minimum "competence" might be measured. This problem demands ingenuity and patience. Social workers have motives aplenty for persisting in study of ways in which the social agency may acknowledge its accountability to clients and public for the efficiency of its operation. Closely related to these motives is another, that of assuring for themselves that the agency provides an environment in which social work can really be performed and greater proficiency be developed in the course of performance.

THE usefulness of working backward from "grievance" situations to see what agency procedures might have helped to adjust them in their earlier stages is illustrated in the report of the Personnel Adjustments Committee of the Philadelphia Chapter. The report contributes to a clearer definition of the AASW'S role in grievance situations and of its concern with those principles of agency administration which determine employment conditions for social workers.

THE Food Stamp plan is interesting evidence that government can learn by experience. It is noteworthy that a federal department primarily concerned with crops rather than people has shown so vigorous a determination to adjust its program radically, in a direction designed perhaps better to move the crops, but surely to move them with greater consideration for the needs of people than the slaughter of little pigs. It may be, as Stuart Chase contends, that this plan "might just prove to be the beginning of a social invention which will end the paradox of plenty forever." It may be, also, that having devised this method, a still better one may be within the range of creative imaginations focused on the greatest single problem of our time.

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Food Stamps

"The conscience of the American people has long been shocked by the paradox of farmers impoverished by abundance while at the same time millions of consumers were hungry for food which was rotting because the price for it would not pay the cost of harvesting and transportation."—Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace.

The initiation of the Food Stamp plan as a new method of distributing surplus commodities brought immediate inquiries to the office of the AASW. Accordingly after a series of preliminary conferences with members in Rochester, where the experiment opened, and with officials in the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, the Association undertook a study of the plan* in cooperation with the American Public Welfare Association, already committed to an examination of this new program, and the Russell Sage Foundation, which generously permitted the use of Miss Colcord's time for field trips to Rochester and Dayton. Glen Leet for the APWA and Dorothy C. Kahn for the AASW embarked on the Washington contacts and others will follow. While not all the cities in which the plan is at work can be visited, material concerning them is being gathered from various sources, and chapters and individual members are being requested to assist to this end.

The plan has been so generally publicized by the Department of Agriculture that only a brief description of the way it works should be necessary. After nearly four years of effort on the part of the Surplus Commodities Corporation to buy surplus foods and distribute them to persons on relief, conviction had grown that more effective methods could be devised. Problems of purchase, distribution, spoilage, and waste had been great in spite of varying degrees of efficiency in administration throughout the country. Business men, farmers, administrators, social workers and the general public had from time to time questioned the program and expressed the hope that some way could be found to get surplus foods into the hands of those who needed them without running the risks of disturbing normal family economy, wasting unwanted but valuable foodstuffs and circumventing the normal channels of trade. That the new plan meets most of these criticisms and constitutes an enormous improvement over all previous methods of distribution is already apparent.

This is how it works, as explained in an address by Milo Perkins, President of the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, to the National Association of Retail Grocers on June 21, 1939:

1. Studies indicate that persons getting public assistance spend an average of about $1.00 a a week per person for food.
2. On a voluntary basis, such persons may buy a minimum of $1.00's worth of orange stamps a week for each member of the family. These are good for any food at any grocery store.
3. Persons buying orange stamps receive half again as many blue stamps free. They receive these in place of the commodities they formerly got at food depots. These blue stamps also are good at any grocery store but only for foods found to be 'in surplus' by the Secretary of Agriculture. (Chiefly, dairy and poultry products, fruits and vegetables; meats could easily be handled by this method, however, if it became necessary to to do so.)
4. Grocers paste the stamps, each worth twenty-five cents, on $5.00 cards and redeem them largely through their banks. The Government pays the banks for both colored stamps; the blue stamps are redeemed from the same funds that are now used to purchase surplus commodities directly.
5. Under the Stamp Plan, therefore, persons receiving public aid can get surplus foods at the corner grocery store. They will have seven and one-half cents to spend for each meal rather than the five cents a meal they are spending now. That will improve farm income as well as the public health. The idea is to eat the surplus—that is, the part that can be consumed in this country.

Variations of the plan are being developed to meet problems that have appeared. These variations include: (1) the use of blue stamps only, in cities where clients receive grocery orders and have no cash to buy stamps; (2) reduction of the minimum purchase requirement for large size families. Others may be made as experience requires.

The plan has to date been inaugurated in the following cities:

Rochester, N. Y.	May 16
Dayton, Ohio	June 5
Seattle, Wash.	July 5
Birmingham, Ala.	August 1

* This is the first of a series of reports on the operation of this plan now being studied jointly by the American Association of Social Workers, American Public Welfare Association and the Russell Sage Foundation.

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Preparations are being completed to start in Des Moines, Iowa, Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma, and between 35 and 49 other cities by January 1, 1940, and an equal number in the first months of the coming year. A survey actually was started in Shawnee, Oklahoma, on September 6 preparatory to the inauguration here of an experiment in permitting low-income groups not on relief or WPA to participate in the benefits of the plan. This was made possible by an amendment to previous legislation (Section 32 of Public Law 320 as amended, 74th Congress) to permit the extension of the benefits of distribution of surplus commodities to low-income groups in addition to groups receiving public aid. This is a radical departure from previous policy and may well serve as a test of the entire program.

The Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation is making studies and gathering data on procedural problems and on the extent and type of participation, food habits of different groups, and the effect on food sales. Grocers' associations are studying their experience, and sending substantial releases to members from time to time. The Bureau of Home Economics, Department of Agriculture, has visited all of the cities in which the plan is under way and is making a detailed study in Dayton of food consumption on the part of selected groups of WPA and direct relief clients for the purpose of comparing the content and nutritional adequacy of the diets of families participating in the stamp plan with those of their non-participating neighbors of similar income, family size, and expenditures for food. It is hoped that the study will be completed by the last week in October.

The joint study in which the AASW is engaged is attempting to secure information concerning national policy and program in some detail as it develops, to observe the actual operation of the plan in as many places as possible, and to study the mechanics, in the purchase of stamps, their use, the attitudes of clients, public officials, professional and business groups, the press and the general public in this most vital innovation. Newspapers and magazines are also very much interested and there are a number of special assignments by various journals. Perhaps the most enthusiastic report to date, with the possible exception of the Corporation's own releases and reports from grocers' trade associations, was the article by Stuart Chase, "Waste Not–Want Not" in the July issue of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

It is obviously too early to express judgments on those aspects of the plan of greatest concern to social workers. These will emerge from experience as it is studied in place after place. AASW chapters in the experimental areas are being requested to watch the plan carefully in order to be able to contribute their special knowledge to the observations and studies of others. Certain trends are, however, already clear enough as a result of the joint study to be cited:

1. There is general agreement that the plan is a vast improvement over all previous methods.

2. A far more general approval by various groups greeted the plan than welcomed any of its predecessors and this approval has not waned to date.

3. Participation in the plan on the part of clients has increased to a substantial proportion of those eligible (detailed figures on file).

4. Eligibility determination has presented only two serious problems to date:

   (a) clerical burdens on local assistance and WPA offices due to original certification forms, and changes in status, loss of stamps, re-authorization, pay deductions (in case of WPA) and similar difficulties.
   (b) the problem in the case of the low-income group experiment of determining the level of income to be used and methods of determining those eligible at this level.

5. Arrangements for purchase of stamps seem to be well organized but where relief payments are not staggered evenly over the case load throughout the month, there are alternate periods of great congestion and slackness in the purchasing centers.

6. Clients generally seem to like the stamps and are able to use them with greater freedom of choice, less embarrassment, and more flexibility than other kinds of commodity orders. Inconvenience due to the 25-cent unit value of the stamps has been met by some stores on their own initiative by credit slips in lower denominations. The requirement of returned stamp book covers may make the plan less popular, when the choice of surplus items is more restricted than in today's market.

7. "Chiseling" insofar as it can be judged by complaints received and verified has been of a kind not anticipated in the plan and not extensive so far as can be learned. It is

possible for dealers to take advantage of the F.S.C.C., through clients not participating or not using their maximum amount of stamps, to make a clear profit on no sales. They may also accept blue stamps for non-surplus goods, which means no monetary loss to the Federal authority but results in failure to move the surplus. They may also retain stamps in payment of back bills or connive at the resale of commodities for cash or their barter for other more desired items.

All these evasions carry penalties, and the grocers are attempting, not very effectually, to police themselves. The Corporation is also watching developments carefully, and will take steps if violations of the letter or spirit of the law should become extensive.

8. Social agencies report general satisfaction although one city fears the effect of the plan on cash relief and believes that even if it does not tend to undermine hard won standards, it tends to "freeze the food budget" by requiring a certain minimum purchase per person. They would like to see an experiment in distributing blue stamps without requiring the purchase of orange stamps, to see whether the fears of the F.S.C.C. and grocers (i.e., that use of surplus stamps without any regularly required food purchases would lead to substitution of surplus foods and thus fail to increase consumption) are really justified.

9. Redemption of stamps is also well organized but there are questions coming from banks as to their ability to handle the volume of business without charge. There is also a question as to whether the requirement of redeeming in minimum amounts of $5.00 may tend to freeze out the very small storekeeper or huckster, who cannot afford this capital outlay even for a day.

10. There are no notable influences on intake of welfare agencies as yet. But this question should be watched closely in the fall and winter months.

Other interesting points not a part of our study show no marked trends as yet. Data on the movement of surpluses and changes in food prices are too inconclusive at this stage to show marked trends. This is due partly to the limited number of places where the plan is in effect, so that no nation-wide results could be expected, and partly to the presence of other factors, like seasonal supplies, which conceal price trends. This much, however, is clear at this writing—that surpluses named by the Secretary of Agriculture are moving, however irregularly, the order of preference being butter, eggs, fresh fruits, green vegetables, with cereals, dried beans, and prunes trailing. It is reported, moreover, that items like prunes, not ordinarily stocked in summer, are sought by holders of blue stamps, and that cornmeal is consumed out of proportion to normal habits of northern buyers. This cannot be due, as might be expected, to a dearth of more attractive items, although relative prices might affect the choices of the thrifty housewife.

A question on which economists might comment is the probable effect of this program on the actual existence of surpluses. Will there be a tendency to increase the production of items which the F.S.C.C. might, hopefully, be expected to buy, irrespective of "effective demand"? And will the Department of Agriculture itself, even with its vast machinery for estimating both crops and markets, be able to distinguish an *unusable* surplus, i.e., food in excess of what the people are willing or able to consume, from the *market* surplus, which represents only what people have no money to buy?

And is there a fair possibility that if the plan succeeds on a broad scale we shall see substituted for our present money system, a stamp system, as the only effective method of getting existing food into the possession of those who need and want it?

A further vital question arises out of the current international conflict and its possible effect on American economy. Surpluses may disappear from the American markets under the impact of war demands and embargoes. What will happen then to food stamps, and to the families who depend upon them to supplement inadequate food grants, made more inadequate by rising prices?

To what extent have the unemployed tried to get work and used public employment offices for this purpose? What were the so-called labor shortages which were said to exist during the recovery of 1936–37? "The Search for Work in Philadelphia," a report of a study conducted by the WPA National Research Project and the Industrial Research Department of the University of Pennsylvania, furnishes telling evidence of the search for work and valuable information about the high standards of selectivity adopted by employers which have tended "to 'freeze' many qualified workers within the 'hard core' of the unemployed."

Basic Problems and Current Trends in Staff Development

By **Agnes Van Driel**, Chief, Division of Technical Training, Bureau of Public Assistance, Social Security Board

NEVER before in the history of our country has there been such wide-spread interest as there is today, in the subject of staff development. This interest manifests itself not alone in social agencies, public and private, but in business, government, and in fact in every undertaking involving personnel.

This interest in staff development as it is found in public welfare agencies is shown by the staffs themselves who are pressing for it. Some staffs ask for "training," others for "help in doing the job," while still others are less articulate in expressing their requests. Supervisors and administrators are coming to see the need for some program of staff development in their agencies. The motives for such promptings vary. In some instances it may be due to an attempt to satisfy their employees. In other instances it may be due to an appreciation on the part of supervisors and administrators of the value of a program of staff development to the administration of the agency.

"The whole notion of training wherever it is found, regardless of the agency or organization, is based on the assumptions that in general individuals wish to do good work, that they have capacity for growth, and that the job to be done is dynamic not static. If these assumptions are correct it also follows that the standard of service acceptable today is not good enough to be acceptable next month or next year."

There is also a trend toward differentiation among the states in regard to staff development programs in the various public welfare agencies. Sometimes administrators say that they want a certain kind of training program in order to meet specific needs in their agency, indicating further that "we are different from other states." Sometimes they indicate a desire for a specific kind of staff development program because they wish to utilize certain resources which the state possesses. Supposedly such differentiation is advisable if and when the program which emerges in each instance is built upon sound principles and serves the need of the agency. This wide-spread interest in staff development in public welfare agencies is also made evident through sources other than the agencies themselves. Universities, colleges, schools of public administration, schools of social work, councils of social agencies, chapters of the American Association of Social Workers, state conferences of social work, and other agencies and organizations throughout the country are expressing interest in and are initiating plans for staff development in the agencies in which they have an interest. While the interest may be expressed in diverse ways and the forms of the plans may be varied, it is evident in every section of the country.

It would appear that the general characteristics of the situation regarding staff development, whether it has to do with business, public welfare, or elsewhere, seem to center in the answers to two simple questions: What are the needs of the workers in relation to the effective doing of the job of the agency (or business) of which they are a part? How can all possible resources be best used toward that end? While these questions appear simple, the answers to them are not easy to find. However, these questions may be answered by taking into account the kind of job to be done, whether the business or service is temporary or long-time, and the qualifications of the employed personnel.

With reference to the first of these, if the business is a manufacturing concern and if the objective of the factory is quantitative production or qualitative product, or one in which quality and quantity are of equal importance, the training program needed in such a business will be modified accordingly. The same thing is true regardless of whether the kind of job to be done is selling brushes, stocks and bonds, or selling an idea. Similarly, if the job to be done is public welfare, the objective or function of such an agency points the way toward the kind of training program that will be effective. In the public

assistance programs there is difficulty precisely at this point since there is so much difference of opinion as to the real purpose of public assistance agencies. Until it is determined whether the job is really "to reward the pioneers," "to reward the vote-getters," "to administer assistance efficiently," "to take the load off private agencies," "ham and eggs every Thursday," or still another function, it is difficult to plan an effective training program because of lack of clarification of the end toward which training is to be directed.

Whether it is a business, an organization, or any agency which is considering a training program, the question of whether it is established on a temporary or long-time basis helps determine its training program. A factory manufacturing munitions specifically for a war which is presumably short-lived will have need of a kind of training program that will help employees speed up production to meet current and temporary demands. In public welfare we have had in this country at least two illustrations of short-time, temporary agencies with attempts to plan training programs with that in mind—the American Red Cross during and immediately following the World War and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. In the public assistance agencies we have a long-time program, beset however with difficulties common to emergency agencies—that of getting a large program dealing with a mass problem under way quickly. However, the long-time view must be taken in planning training programs since the service is not temporary in nature.

If workers are of grade school level of education then a training program must be geared to that level; if the staff members are college graduates then in at least certain respects the training program will be different for them. Similarly, it makes a difference in plans for training if workers are new to the work to be done or if they are experienced in it. Not alone do the education and experience qualifications of general staff affect the training program, but the qualifications of the person responsible for planning and directing the training program also condition the kind of program which can be developed.

While much has been said about the relationship of training programs to personnel standards it seems important to comment here that every effort must be taken not to have training misunderstood as a substitute for good personnel standards. That is to say, any training program must be predicated upon the assumption that the best possible personnel standards have been established and will be maintained not alone at the point of selection of staff, but when replacements and additions to staff are made. Otherwise, a program of staff development will actually hinder effective administration by encouraging employment of incompetent persons on the excuse that they will be trained to do the job while on the job.

All of these considerations make of training an inseparable part of administration. If this is so, then any program of staff development to be effective must be indigenous to the nature and needs of the agency, organization, or business for which it is planned. The principle that training is an inseparable part of administration is true in every step of relationships within the agency: federal-state, state-local. Similarly, is it true in regard to each worker and in the relationships between workers who have potential growth value.

The whole notion of training wherever it is found, regardless of the agency or organization, is based on the assumptions that in general individuals wish to do good work, that they have capacity for growth, and that the job to be done is dynamic not static. If these assumptions are correct it also follows that the standard of service acceptable today is not good enough to be acceptable next month or next year.

Along with a recognition of need for consideration of agency function in planning a program of staff development for that agency there is also need of consideration of individual job function. For how can an individual worker improve his performance on the job if he is not clear as to what his job is? This re-emphasizes the need for training for every staff member, not alone for certain members nor for certain groups of workers.

At the same time it is important to recognize the broader base as plans for training are developed so that one does not focus attention upon too small an area. Specifically, a worker can fully understand his particular job only as he understands the whole of which he is a small part. Beyond that, he can fully understand his particular job only as he understands the relationship of his agency to other agencies; as he understands his relationship to the total economic and social structure which goes to make a world economy.

Again, this question of a training program resolves itself into several simple questions: what shall be its content, what shall be the method, what shall be the timing in terms of

use of content and method? Applying these questions to public welfare agencies, in considering content, one asks whether it shall be the policies and procedures of the agency, a study of the social sciences, a study of one of these (such as political science or economics) or a study of one subject within one of these social sciences, as for example, distribution, or taxation? Shall it be a total curriculum of professional education? Or is it a combination of two or more, or of many possible contents? The answer lies in the answers made to questions earlier proposed. As to method, shall the training program take shape through use of individual conferences, through group discussions, through classes, institutes, or lectures, or shall it be a combination of several, many, or all? A choice of timing in use of both content and method must be made since all possible elements in content and all possible methods cannot be begun at one and the same time nor always be carried at one and the same time once they are started. Presumably here too the needs of individual states in the planning of staff development programs in public welfare will develop because of differences in needs. Here the influence of the factor of competence of personnel will again be felt since content and method, and timing, as well, will be affected by the caliber of personnel.

Chief among the resources found within the agency itself, which may be available to a program of staff development, are the administrative processes. Most important of these is supervision. Supervision will be valuable as a tool in staff development only when it is considered as a cooperative undertaking, not a checking process. When it is a cooperative undertaking it offers limitless potentialities for effecting growth in those who participate.

Resources lying outside the agency are educational institutions of one kind or another. As a resource in a program of staff development they may be used for general education at undergraduate level, for graduate work in liberal arts, and for education through their professional schools. Also to be included as possible contributions of educational institutions to programs of staff development, is work offered by colleges and universities which is not of regular curriculum content. So, too, is the contribution of the faculties of certain departments and schools as groups or as individual members in advisory and consultative services at certain points in the agency's work. Helpful also as resources in the development and maintenance of a program of staff development are such institutions and agencies as the American Public Welfare Association, the American Association of Social Workers, the American Association of Schools of Social Work, foundations, state conferences of social work, and councils of social agencies.

Through the fullest and wisest use of available resources, the agency should be strengthened by its training program to improve its administrative structure and thus facilitate approach to attainment of the agency's immediate objectives. Through broadening the base and enriching the content of a training program in the agency, the agency's ultimate objectives should come nearer to attainment.

Evaluation by the School of Social Work

The Committee on Training of the Nebraska Chapter conducted an open forum in January in which the following questions were proposed for discussion:

1. What is the responsibility of a school of social work if, after a selective admission process and a period of training, there is a question of the student's capacity for the field of social work?
2. If a student is allowed to stay in school for a term or terms has he a right to expect recommendation for placement from the school?
3. What should the agency expect of a student just out of school?

The range of problems brought up in discussion of these questions suggests that this program might be of general interest to other chapters concerned with the problems and responsibilities of professional education as the main line of defense against incompetence in practice.

The *News Letter* of the Civil Service Assembly for July 1939 lists in its bibliography the two bulletins prepared by the Nebraska Chapter and reprinted in the May COMPASS on "Facts and Arguments for the Merit System in Public Welfare Administration."

Procedures for Personnel Adjustments Within the Agency

Report of Personnel Adjustments Committee
of the Philadelphia Chapter

This report is not a final report of the committee but a revision after discussion in the Chapter. It represents a significant effort to define procedures within the agency which will either prevent the development of "grievances" or enable them to be dealt with in an orderly way.

The Personnel Adjustments Committee of the Chapter was created to provide machinery within the professional organization for the consideration of problems arising in the relationship of the professional staff to the agency that have not been adjusted to the satisfaction of either party and therefore either party may wish a reconsideration by the body that represents the profession itself. It has seemed to the committee that the first question to consider in any problem of adjustment is the procedure within the agency itself to solve the problem; and that this procedure inevitably is related to general administrative policies.

The committee, in its recommendations, has therefore been primarily concerned with sound principles of administration involving the acceptance of the function of the Board as policy-making and of the executive as administering the service in accordance with the policies decided upon by the Board. Also it has taken into consideration democratic principles of administration whereby the members of the staff are considered as responsible participants in carrying out the agency's services and therefore should be given opportunity from the beginning to understand agency policies, to accept their own professional responsibility in relation to these policies and to express themselves in regard to their formulation and their application to the service and the personnel.

While the majority of agencies may seldom, if ever, have any need to call upon a definite review procedure, these recommendations might well be considered as an expression of general administrative principles. Also it is recognized that actual procedure in a public agency may of necessity differ in detail from that of a private agency because of specific legislation or regulation. However, the committee feels that the administrative principles involved are the same whether in a private or a public agency, although the details of carrying these out may differ.

I. *Recommendations as to general employment procedure.*

Since "grievances" requiring review procedure in many instances might be reduced almost to the vanishing point through a thorough understanding between agency and worker at the time of employment, the following points are recommended as the basis for such understanding.

A. The requirements of the position and details as to conditions of work.

This would include the worker's understanding of the agency's attitude toward questions other than those that relate to professional competence, such as participation in "social action"; political affiliations; union membership, etc.

B. A written record of employment agreement—whether considered as a contract or not—covering such items as those included in the AASW "Statement About Standard Employment Practices."

C. Methods of supervision and of evaluating competence.

This would cover such questions as: what is included in agency supervision; the basis on which evaluations are made; their frequency, if they occur at any stated interval; whether these evaluations are discussed with the worker, the worker having opportunity to make his own comments.

II. *Recommendations for review procedure—whether the problem arises from the worker's standpoint or the agency's standpoint.*

A. There would be discussion between the worker and the person next in author-

ity, up to the executive, thus giving opportunity for the matter to be straightened out, if possible, with those directly administratively responsible.

1. At these various steps there might be written documented statements if the situation calls for it.

B. The agency would have a *standing* committee, rather than a committee appointed because of an emergency situation, that could serve as a review committee. The value in its being a standing committee is that this makes for more continued acceptance of responsibility in relation to personnel problems and the acquisition of skill in their consideration. Such a committee should represent—and be chosen by —a cross-section of those responsible for the agency's service: the Board; supervisors; staff; and always the executive, as the individual to whom final administrative responsibility is delegated. Proportions as to representation are not suggested, as these would vary with the size of the agency. In some agencies, such a representative committee already exists as a personnel committee; in other agencies there may be some other standing committee to which the desirable representation could be added. There is obvious advantage in using an existing representative committee that is accustomed to working together.

When a problem arises requiring review, anyone immediately involved in the situation would not serve on the committee, a substitute being appointed by the group represented. However, the executive must always be present, whether as a member of the committee or as one of those immediately involved in the situation, because the executive, so long as employed, remains the responsible administrative head of the agency.

C. Review committee procedure.

1. Questions may be referred to the committee by either party if not satisfactorily settled by discussion as outlined under II-A.
2. Basis for hearings by the committee. Any staff member may ask for a hearing if he believes that there has been discrimination in the application of personnel policies because of race, creed, union relationship or personal bias; if he thinks he has been improperly classified or transferred or that his professional evaluation has been unfair, thus leading to his demotion or dismissal.
3. On referral, the committee will make an investigation of the facts—all documented facts and steps taken to rectify the situation.
4. At the hearing before the committee the chief participants will be present.
5. The committee, on the basis of the facts acquired through its investigation and the hearing, will make an analysis of these facts as it sees them —and report to the executive.

D. The decision as to the action to be taken in regard to the individual case must rest with the executive as the person ultimately responsible for the selection and dismissal of the staff, except as otherwise stated by law or regulation. This recommendation is in line with the following principles of sound administration already suggested. The Board appoints the executive and delegates to him the responsibility for administering the agency and for its service in accordance with policies decided upon by the Board. The executive can assume such responsibilities only if he is also responsible for the selection and dismissal of the staff through whom the service is carried on. It is the opinion of the Personnel Adjustments Committee that a hearing before a review committee does not change this principle of centering responsibility in the executive and then holding the executive responsible.

This leaves the following as the potential values in such a review procedure.

1. It gives any member of the staff an opportunty to have the problem as he sees it given careful consideration by a representative group in the agency.
2. The facts may indicate the need for a general review of personnel practices.
3. While the decision rests with the executive, much may be learned by all groups represented by such a joint, objective consideration of problems involved in any individual situation.

4. It may indicate that the executive is not capable of assuming the responsibility assigned to him. In that case, it becomes the responsibility of the Board, who employed him, to act in relation to his continued employment but not to take away any of his proper responsibilities so long as he is executive.

III. *Recommendations as to use of the Personnel Adjustments Committee of the Chapter.*

A. If the decision is not satisfactory to either party it may be referred to the chapter committee in order to have the consideration of the professional organization.

B. Before the Personnel Adjustments Committee gives consideration to any question referred to it, it feels some agency procedure should have taken place.

C. When a chapter member from an agency having no review procedure wishes the committee to consider a problem, the committee may suggest to the agency some review procedure before committee consideration.

PHOEBE VALENTINE
ALMENA DAWLEY
LULU SCOTT
GERTRUDE DUBINSKY
ROSE GREEN
KATHERINE TUCKER, *Chairman*

More Staff Notes

The national staff prepared and supplied to delegates at the Delegate Conference an informal comment of its own as a supplement to the reports from national committees. One section of these "Staff Notes," dealing with the problem of THE COMPASS, was published in the August COMPASS. Below are reproduced the remaining three sections of the staff's discussion of certain problems in the Association's operation as these appear from the staff's angle of vision.

TURNING TO STUDY OF MEMBERSHIP

During the last few years there has been an increasing ferment of interest in the membership requirements. The plan to focus attention on adequate and systematic study has been sidetracked to some extent by the preoccupying emphasis on the Association's purpose, function and structure. In their discussions of membership members have been handicapped by lack of materials on problems that trouble them.

It is clear that the history of the requirements would be worth investigation. Why were the old requirements thrown into the discard? Whose is the responsibility for the Association's having membership requirements? What significance have membership requirements that they should be given the dignity of by-laws? What justification was seen for involving the Association in the technicalities of the present requirements? What are the pros and cons of "flexibility"? Should we judge the membership requirements by individual cases of inclusion or exclusion; or are our dissatisfactions with these to be weighed against other considerations? What if anything would our experience with the requirements tell us if we were to examine it in chapter and national files? Answers to these questions are necessary because the membership requirements appear to be taken for granted as if their reason for being was self-evident and their influence known from a long experience.

There are different kinds of problems to be taken into account in connection with the membership requirements, all related to one another but for practical purposes worth the effort of separate consideration. One problem is that of purpose. With more organizations in social work than we can keep up with, why do we want this particular Association? What kind of members do we need for power and resources in driving at our desired objectives? What are the gains or the sacrifices to be faced in making one or another decision? What are the specific things which all members should have in order to agree on a special goal and to have any contribution to make to its accomplishment? What part has a greater or smaller number of members to play in achieving the desired end?

Another set of technical problems is familiar to applicants, chapter membership committees and the national membership administration. These constitute the "red tape" of membership. In what terms should the requirements be set to realize the Association's purpose? How does each part of the requirements fit into the whole and define the equipment which is being sought? Where the standard includes professional education there must be ways of measuring professional education. Where the membership standard recognizes experience in a social agency,

measures for agency experience must be found.

There are also problems of administration as they must be dealt with in the chapters and in the national membership administration. Some requirements can be applied with relative ease, accuracy and uniformity. Others involve detailed and progressive inquiries, evaluation of the sources of information, special individual decisions, more time in process and delays in reaching conclusions. Study of chapter and national experience could yield information on the effects which various changes in the technical requirements would have on administrative promptness, delays and costs, and therefore on program throughout the Association.

Because for so long the problems of technical interpretation and administration have monopolized the membership stage, the underlying issues involved in having membership requirements have received relatively little examination and appraisal. A study of these issues would reveal that the membership requirements affect professional social workers in many more ways than are likely to be recognized through personal experience. If their influence were not taken for granted or judged by individual instances we would find evidence of their extensive influence on social work and the conditions under which it must operate. For example, the membership requirements have given education for social work strong support. They have served professional social work as its proof that there is a competence which should be safeguarded through merit systems in public welfare. They have provided professional social workers with a foothold for influencing the status which civil service gives to social work positions and for insisting on a selection that limits competition to those who can lay some claim to an established knowledge and skill. It is the requirements which stand back of the Association's Statement About Standard Employment Practices which in turn has moved social agencies to action. Furthermore, the requirements mark with a special authority the knowledge, experience and contribution which professional social work can bring to bear on issues of general public concern and help to establish the difference between authentic social work opinion and the pronouncements of those who are swayed by financial, political or other interests. The range of influence of the requirements and the nature of that influence are important subjects for more study than the Association has so far given them.

The staff has extensive evidence of the great variety of questions which have been raised about the membership requirements. To do these questions justice would require planned effort and systematic inquiry into the issues involved. Opinions of members vary widely and come from all kinds and degrees of experience and knowledge of the effects of the requirements and of conviction about the purposes and program which the Association should pursue. The development in the membership's understanding of professional purposes and obligations is revealed in the growing tendency to examine the requirements in their bearing on the Association's whole direction and program. A survey of opinion reveals little desire to abolish or lower the membership standard but does show that there is an increasing interest in studying it with a view to determining what revisions should be made. There are chapters and groups who want either to tighten up the technical rulings or to raise the requirements in various ways. Most of those who advocate broadening the base of the requirements are at the same time concerned to maintain them at their present level.

The specific criticisms of the requirements as they stand and the various proposals for correcting their defects present a somewhat misleading picture of disagreement and conflict for under the sharp differences about policy and method is to be found the same basic concern for the development of social work as a whole. The conflicts in opinion have to do less frequently with professional ends than with means. The questions which worry members are matters of major seriousness. How may those functional fields which do not use or possess facilities for professional education become more closely identified with the professional social work family? How can the Association discharge its responsibility for seeing that the public welfare services do not drift away from social work? How can the Association assist in the development of adequate personnel and the overcoming of the present serious obstacles to educational preparation for social work functions? By what means can professional social work meet the needs of the social workers not included in its present membership? What position should the Association take in relation to the development of other membership organizations in the field of social work? The Association's difficulty at the present time seems to be the lack of opportunity for full membership discussion of

(*Continued on page 17*)

Can We Rate Social Agencies?

FOR some years the AASW has worked on the problem of defining the "approved" or "recognized" agency. Ideas as to what it is important that an agency must be or do to meet an acceptable standard have not been lacking. The difficulty has been to invent a yardstick whereby the essential qualities might be measured. By what definite, visible signs might an approvable agency be known? What escape might be devised from the present awkward necessity for basing judgment on agency reputation and local opinion rather than on facts? What way might there be of recognizing differences in the development and conditions of agencies and avoiding the danger of asking them to subscribe to a single arbitrary standard? How might a distinction be made between what the agency thinks it is doing and its actual success in carrying into practice its proposed aims? Evaluations of the agency have presented even more difficulty than evaluations of the individual worker. Among these difficulties is the tendency for agencies to take themselves for granted and to be sensitive about having their internal practices and conditions known.

One provocation for the AASW's official interest in the problem of the approved agency has been the administrative problem of membership "intake": there has been the need to find more reliable ways of evaluating the experience which candidates for admission to the Association offer in satisfaction of certain of the membership requirements. This is, however, only one form of a general problem with which social workers have many other reasons to be vitally concerned. The announcement by the board of the JVS of its decision to close the social workers' one professional placement agency at the end of the calendar year sharply reminds us of some of the vocational dangers to which the continuing lack of a practical index to the social agency's quality exposes social work as a career. Singly, social workers are handicapped in safeguarding themselves against these risks. As a professional group, there is much for them to do in advancing further toward a standard for social agencies.

The stake of the individual social worker in finding ways and means by which the agency's adequacy may be known, appraised, and then compared objectively with a minimum recognized standard is practical and personal. Without better opportunities for learning in advance of employment what the agency's standards are, the social worker must bargain with unknowns which may affect his future status and advancement in a number of adverse ways. Even the worker equipped with the best of professional education and the most impressive of previous work records remains accountable for producing evidence of continued proficiency and growth. To the degree that the worker lacks full professional preparation and an experience which is generally valued in the group he becomes more vulnerable to serious misadventures in agencies whose standards present obstacles to effective performance.

Even though we now look to professional education for a professional foundation, experience is a precious and indispensable commodity to any social worker. To the individual social worker the competence and status of the agency are important because they affect the satisfaction he can hope to derive from doing his job, his chance to render the maximum service of which he is capable, his opportunity for further development through successful accomplishment, his prospects for keeping abreast of his colleagues in practice. On the agency's efficiency in operation he must in part depend for protection against those conditions which are productive of defective performance and poor working relationships: these difficulties need not be dramatic to score against him and detract from his professional status and reputation. Often the worker's reliance on the agency is more complete than he knows for his inexperience may make him uncritically susceptible to damaging influences in the agency and unaware that the values which he is attaching to his experience may be denied by future evaluators of his record.

The Association's direct attempt to define criteria for the approved agency did not produce requirements sufficiently concrete for practical application as an agency yardstick. It has been from another source, the concern with standard employment practices, that effective tools for measuring the agency are being forged. Studies of varying comprehensiveness have been made to discover what the employment practices of social agencies

are. Public agencies have in general been more conspicuous for working out written statements than have the private, but private agencies are increasingly aware that questions of personnel and employment practices are proper matters for professional discussion. A problem entitled to fresh and energetic study by social workers is that of capitalizing the progress which was made in formulating the Association's "Statement About Standard Employment Practices in Social Work" and the experience which has accrued from its use. What can we now do to define further the requirements which any responsible social agency might be expected to meet? How may social workers promote an interest in their agencies in meeting these requirements and so in establishing as a standard certain generally approved practices?

Reports on some of the studies which have been made of personnel and employment practices should be productive of ideas as to what additional elementary requirements might be proposed to agencies. Alice McCabe in the study * which the Association has just published has assembled and applied interesting criteria to the consideration of agency conditions in their effect on professional performance and development. Various reports and studies, some of which are listed in this issue of THE COMPASS as "For Committee and Reference Use," should also be provocative. The problem meriting special attention from social workers is the problem of how best to get agencies to work productively in an area where little can be accomplished unless agencies take the initiative. What real practical difficulties are responsible for agency inactivity and how may these be met? What steps is it advisable for an agency to take in defining its conditions and practices? Would it be useful to ask agencies which have done some systematic work in study of their personnel and employment practices and which may have set up agency projects or procedures for this purpose to report on the ways in which they have gone about it? Have we already some useful experience to consult, such as the St. Louis County Welfare Association's "Experiment with Evaluation of the Professional Staff"?†

There is reason to believe that local study by groups working in or outside the chapters will discover more fruitful methods of stimulating interest and activity in responsible social agencies. For example, social agencies may not have defined or formulated in written statements available to their staffs their personnel and employment practices. Nevertheless most social agencies have had practices of one sort or another. How desirable and practical would it be to set as an elementary requirement upon the agency its written formulation of practices as far as it can state them and no matter what their defects or lacks? Similarly many agencies are not as inexperienced in evaluation of staff members as the unanswered questions about evaluation would suggest. Evaluation in one form or another has been practiced for years. Would more headway be made in answering perplexing questions about evaluation method if responsible agencies were to engage in planned periodic evaluations of their staff, and study were then given to the written evaluations and their content and method were analyzed? Might such periodic evaluations be set up as an elementary requirement upon the agency? The studies which are now available are evidence of a ferment among social workers and their agencies. Among the possibilities for social work leadership is this of engaging the interest of agencies in making into planned agency procedures processes which have been going on in a less systematic directed fashion. Doubtless there are other possibilities of crystallizing practical requirements for the responsible agency to meet. These possibilities will best be discovered through local discussion and initiative. The social worker's stake in finding concrete standards by which the quality of agencies may be measured is not theoretical but concrete and immediate. What more tangible objective could we have than that of making social work safe as a career?

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* Personnel and Employment Practices in Six Social Case Work Agencies in St. Louis, 1936, price $1.00. See announcement in THE COMPASS, August 1939.

† Cf. THE COMPASS, August 1939.

U. S. Children's Bureau Retains Authority Over Personnel Standards

Mr. Leet, in reporting Security Act changes in the August COMPASS, noted that "due to an oversight in drafting the Social Security Board is given authority over personnel standards in the programs supervised by the U. S. Children's Bureau." The word "Board" was used inadvertently instead of the "Chief of the Children's Bureau." THE COMPASS is assured, however, that this use of the word "Board" does not in any way change the jurisdiction of the Children's Bureau in the administration of its programs under the Act.

Letter to the President

The President, Sept. 18, 1939
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

International strife, as we know you realize, even more than the economic dislocation of the past decade, calls direct attention to problems of human life and welfare. The governmental and voluntary welfare programs of this country have been adapting their operations in recent years to deal with the mental and physical sufferings involved in widespread economic changes in the United States and they are still taxed to the limit of their resources. It is of the greatest importance that the standards achieved should not be lost. It is also of the greatest importance, however, that the welfare programs and their resources be mobile and be able to adapt themselves to important shifts or changes in order to meet new, emergent needs.

This Association is composed of 11,000 social workers whose special preparation and experience make them the backbone of these social work programs. Beyond their relationships as employees of public and private agencies they have the professional concern to develop out of social work its greatest usefulness.

If emergent needs do arise, involving the adaptation or realignment of the welfare resources of the United States, we are sure that the membership of the American Association of Social Workers would want to play its part in such a transition and would wish the Association to be at your service to discuss ways and means by which social workers could be most useful to you or to the State Department or to any part of the government's program which you might designate.

We assume that the use of social work forces is an important part of the democratic program based on the principle of concern for the people of the democracy. We write to you because of the great strides which the government of the United States has made in recent years in the development of programs which deal directly with the needs of the people.

Very sincerely yours,
Walter West,
Executive Secretary.

Plans for the Year's Program

A different kind of Delegate Conference is part of the plan for the current year's program. Having utilized two conferences for discussion and action on structural and administrative concerns of the membership and chapters, the next one is planned as a recapitulation of program activities of the chapters and the national association.

Steps in preparation are under way: first with the outlining of program material by the staff; then work on this by a special program committee to be appointed soon for the purpose of making recommendations to the National Board at its first meeting later in the fall. Appointments of other division and committee membership for the year will follow as the third immediate step.

Selection of particular projects to be undertaken by the staff and national committees will be made later. Current indications from chapter and membership sources suggest the certainty that among the main points for Association work this year will be problems of standards of personnel and of employment practices; national, state and local problems in relation to further development of social work resources; and the relationship of the Association's membership requirements as implements in the development of standards in social work. Intensive work on methods of effective professional activity in the chapter organizations is also bound to be an important aspect of the program.

Inquiries are being received concerning local and overseas social work activities in connection with the European war. We are informed that the Red Cross is assisting in the return of stranded Americans but is otherwise engaging in no new activities at this time. No personnel is being sent abroad and at the present time no drives for funds are contemplated other than an increase in Red Cross membership. The Neutrality Act requires Presidential approval of efforts to raise funds for belligerent nations.

The American Red Cross has requested the office of the International Red Cross in Geneva to establish an information service.

The AASW's relief survey is referred to as an authoritative source in newspaper answers to queries about relief appearing both in syndicated question and answer departments and in independent columns such as that of the *New York World-Telegram.*

For Reference and Committee Use

For an experimental period the Compass *will list reports received from chapter committees which deal with problems of current interest and contain materials which may be of value to other chapters and to members. Copies of these so far as available may be secured from the national office.*

Personnel and Employment Practices

"Recommended Employment Practice Standards (based on private agency standards)," San Francisco Chapter, April 1939. The proposed standards "are the result of some months of earnest effort by a committee composed of board members and executives of private social agencies in San Francisco in cooperation with members of the San Francisco Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers. They represent the consideration of material gathered from this and other communities in the United States. The committee did not approach its task with the belief that it would be possible or desirable to be dogmatic or arbitrary but with the belief that standards can be developed out of common experience and a recognition that the problems of the employing agency and social workers have the common goal of efficient service to the community of San Francisco." The statement calls for a four week minimum of vacation, speaks for the goal of a five day week, and applies the same standard to part-time as to full-time workers.

"Report of the Committee on Employment Practices," Connecticut Chapter, May 1938. The study was undertaken "in the belief that we needed data on current agency practices before we talked in terms of a standard and methods of adopting such a standard." The report presents the results of a questionnaire answered by 105 agencies throughout the state and covers data obtained on existing provisions for regulation of employment practices; employment policies and conditions, etc.

"Report of the Committee on Personnel Standards," Connecticut Chapter, May 1938. The report is based on answers from 105 social agencies in Connecticut to a questionnaire, the purpose of which was "to secure a picture of the personnel standards existing in Connecticut social agencies at the present time. It is the hope of the Committee that this report may serve as a basis for discussion and for constructive suggestion as to how the AASW may help to raise the standards in Connecticut agencies where this is possible." The report covers existing practices in regard to case load; education, training and experience; qualifications of current staff members; membership in professional organizations; field work training for schools of social work; provisions for staff development and staff participation.

"Desirable Employment Practices," Buffalo Chapter, May 1938. This report of the Employment Practices Committee covers the third in a series of studies which began in 1934 with an inquiry into turnover in agency staffs and progressed to a study of existing agency practices. As a positive statement adapting to the local situation the national Statement About Standard Employment Practices, this report make recommendations on training of regular staff, student training in agencies, scholarships, subsidies, staff participation, exchange and loan of employees which merit further discussion.

"Personnel Practices in Social Agencies in Maryland," Maryland Chapter, June 1939. This report, part one of a study the second part of which will be issued at a later date covers data on salaries, working hours, resignations and dismissals, vacation and sick leave, for both professional and clerical staff in 40 of the 46 agencies to which a questionnaire was sent. Since several of these agencies reported for their local units, the data includes 74 agencies in the state. One interesting feature of the original schedule was that it called for reports on actual salaries and statements of the lowest salary being paid, the highest, and the most usual, in each job classification. The report carries good comment on the various findings.

"Personnel Practices of the Family Service Bureau of the United Charities of Chicago," March 1939. This statement is more than usually comprehensive and detailed in its description of conditions, practices, and obligations. It covers case work and clerical positions and its appendixes include several form blanks as well as suggestions about evaluations of case workers. The agency makes provisions for group life insurance, for workmen's compensation and employer's liability, and under certain conditions for an allowance on automobile insurance. It also has a retirement allowance plan. Its provisions for leaves for study should be of interest.

LAY PARTICIPATION

"Report of a Study by the Committee on Lay Participation in Social Work," Cleveland Chapter, June 1939. This report comes from the energetic committee which pursued, among other projects, the preparation of the "Bibliography on Lay Participation" the publication of which, by AASW, was announced in the July COMPASS. The present mimeographed report is of the Committee's three year project during which it set up what seemed to be sound principles on the relationship of the lay person to the agency, tested these principles by asking professional social workers from the various fields of social work to present what they had found practical in their work with lay people, and continued the testing process by inviting laymen to speak from their experience.

MEMBERSHIP

"Handbook for New Members," Cleveland Chapter, March 1939. A six page mimeographed bulletin which includes in brief a statement of AASW purpose, a chart of the national organization, a summary of chapter by-laws, a description of the Ohio Council, a list of chapter committees and their assignments, two charts showing the distribution of the national and chapter dues dollars, and a list of chapters with the number of members in each. This attempt to furnish information about the Association's framework represents an initial attack on the increasingly discussed problem as to what should and can be done to induct new members into chapter activity.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

"Statement of Chapter Policies and Procedures," New York City Chapter, May 1939. This takes the place of the chapter's constitution. Of special interest are statements defining the membership's voice in chapter affairs, the responsibilities of officers, the duties of the executive secretary, and the responsibilities and functions of committees.

The *Christian Science Monitor* for July 22, 1939 devoted its leading editorial to a discussion of the relief problem and referred to findings of the AASW relief survey. Quoting from the AASW news release a passage characterizing those dependent on relief as "American refugees with no place to go," the *Monitor* headed the editorial "American Refugees."

MORE STAFF NOTES

(Continued from page 12)

these problems, and the need is to weigh carefully the various methods which the Association might employ to make headway in their solution.

From the vantage point of national staff it becomes clear that the different discontents with the membership requirements are cover for a host of ambitions to develop further the Association's program. The problems which members believe would be more effectively handled if the requirements were revised in this or the other specific way would merit serious independent study even if the requirements were not in question. Not all of this study could or should be conducted under the auspices of national or chapter membership committees. To get a sound basis for understanding of major issues, teamwork by various existing committees in chapters and national would have to develop for inquiries into different areas. What would chapter studies into the prevailing requirements and qualifications for personnel in certain functional fields reveal? What would the facts about salary standards, the demand for paid personnel and prevalent working conditions show? What does the past experience of social work in creating better standards in its agencies suggest about various approaches which might be used to develop such fields? Where are geographic differences found to mark differences in stages of development in agencies? What constitutes the professionally-minded leadership in fields which have not yet achieved any generally accepted standards for the selection and training of their personnel? How is the Association to assist this professional leadership in such fields to meet difficulties in the way of the training which is desired? What can the Association do to foster and support the development of inservice training programs? What assistance can the AASW give to the extension and improvement of facilities for professional education?

Tied up in the membership problem are rich possibilities for Association program and for the enlistment of members in activities which have an immediate bearing on their professional interests, perplexities and satisfactions.

COMMITTEES IN THE ASSOCIATION'S SERVICE

In the course of the Association's self-study, various references have been made to the fact that the Association is a membership organization and that it is composed of professional

persons. These are cardinal features of the American Association of Social Workers. Their recognition requires a realistic glance at the problems which arise in functioning of committees, as well as in other parts of the Association. Members of national committees, including the Executive Committee, have found themselves torn between their regular employment responsibilities and the demands of responsible committee work.

At the same time the greater complexity of chapter and national programs has brought into the foreground problems of administrative procedure, efficiency and responsibility. Members have been expressing a definite concern that the matters in which they are interested shall be pursued, that committee reports should be available for use and action at the strategic moment, that officers and committees should be held responsible for carrying through assignments and that administration should be judged by the productivity of committees and the promptness and adequacy with which various actions are carried through. Assuming prominence in this picture of ambition and frustration are questions about membership participation and about the selection of officers and committee members. Underneath the surface of lively debate is the feeling that the payer of dues has a right to demand from officers and committees some satisfaction of his own interests.

This growing demand that chapter and national organizations arrive on schedule at definite destinations, that their progress be visible, and that their work be of use to individual members raises important questions of organization policy. The demand is exhilarating evidence that more and more members are not wanting mere status from membership and that the passive indifference which is the most defeating problem in a membership is surrendering to insistence on activity. Among the questions which need still further consideration are the old familiar questions of personnel. If the chapter units are agencies and the national is more than a framework, members brought into committee or other official service have to be conceived as personnel. In relation to committee work, this is the more important because in all its parts the Association relies on committees to create its program. What is it reasonable or unreasonable to expect of members as the personnel to be used for committee purposes?

It is easy to confuse the responsibility of the AASW committee member with that of the agency worker on a staff committee assignment. When this confusion occurs, we fail to capitalize the distinctive assets of membership participation and run afoul of its inherent limitations. As contrasted with work within the social agency, the work done in the Association must depend on volunteer interest and on individual initiative. It must yield to counter-obligations and competing concerns of paid employment. Volunteers cannot be coerced and commanded and retain their virtues as volunteers. Spontaneous impulse and free choice are the heart and soul of professional activity and the only reliable source of the extra energy which social workers can put to work in the professional organization. The regular job experience gives the member the wherewithal for work in the Association and the impetus to go further with problems which experience in practice makes him want to overcome.

Does the voluntary, pioneer nature of committee work mean that neither chapters nor national can ask that committees produce results? Has the member no business to expect chapter or national organization to get definite results from the work of committees? How is respect for the volunteer interest to be reconciled with the need for efficiency and responsibility? On what basis may participation be made to pay dividends? What controls are possible in an agency made up of volunteers? Are there standards of competence for the operation of committees and the selection of their personnel comparable to those for the same personnel in their social agency function?

Developments in various parts of the Association are giving us new answers to these questions. The principles employed in "job specifications" are being used to define committee assignments, robbing them at times of their generous comprehensiveness but giving them also a concreteness which challenges the volunteer for committee service to measure himself and his contribution against the requirements of the specific committee activity. These principles may be used to test the responsible quality of the member's voluntary interest. As the membership becomes more adept in applying its own merit system it would appear likely to give a more positive, definite meaning to the vague notions which we have had of democracy since tests of performance within the Association pay remarkably little respect to prestige of position, personal popularity, age, color, or race.

Problems of Chapter Development

The study of purpose, function and structure which has been applied to the Association might well be given to chapters. During

the year many chapters reported, sometimes in apology, that the questions directed to them by the 1938 Delegate Conference launched them first into a review of their own organization and programs. Actually this was meeting on the home ground responsibility for problems with which chapters have been struggling over a period of years.

Although the development of the national association preceded that of chapters, the chapters are more than "units" in a whole. In the chapters members have their access to association with one another. The chapter is the resource to be used by members to feed an interest and concern in professional matters. To the chapter can be taken questions about the use to be made of what social workers know, about ways and means of overcoming community obstacles to efficient practice, about getting a command of new knowledge which social workers need, and about methods for giving the public the pertinent facts which social workers possess about public issues.

The chapter is the place where members are brought together, with their interests, resources, and problems. It becomes the testing ground for the professional enterprise. In the chapter social work facts are collected, principles and methods are tried out in practice, and new ideas or revised formulations are born in the process. It is as the laboratory for professional effort as well as meeting ground for the membership that the chapter finds its own independent role in the Association.

Within its own community the chapter can serve as a channel for the collective expression and action of professional social workers on issues in which individual social agencies are restrained by their agency interests or relationships. In moments of crisis or attack on the standards or principles of social work the chapter can thus meet the need of social workers to take their independent part in the struggle for their clients' welfare and for their own position in social service programs. As the chapter and social work follow the line of professional development, the chapter can bring about a fruitful professional criticism and exchange of the social work ideas and experience which in the preprofessional era were locked up in a particular agency or field of work.

Through the performance of one or more of these functions, the chapter assumes other roles as well. It was not many years ago that we noted with satisfaction the recognition of a chapter as one of the local groups to be represented in a council of social agencies. This constituted an acceptance in a small way of the profession as having a voice which should be heard in social work along with the voices of laymen, philanthropists and executives representing their agency interests. There is now increased evidence of this acceptance which means that a channel is being opened in social work itself whereby the facts and realities of practice may be considered among the other concerns of community organization, planning and finance.

The chapter is becoming a distinctive agency. It becomes a factor in the social work of its area just as the American Association of Social Workers as a whole has emerged in a comparatively short time as one of the prominent factors in the activities and interpretation of social work. As a consequence the chapter finds itself with an increasing number of regular responsibilities in relation to social programs. The changes in social work organization, public and private, have brought with them broad obligations to which chapters have found themselves responding through increasing activities.

As a consequence, we are faced in the Association with a number of pressing questions. In what ways can we define the chapter's significant role and yet be realistic enough to accept obvious shortcomings and the inevitable dilemma of its having too much to do? Chapters lack the essential organizational resources required to meet the great bulk of the demands upon them. Chapters, like committees, are voluntary groupings of members who are themselves volunteers in the professional enterprise. The work which is presented to them is pioneer work which often involves the marshalling of neglected facts, experiment with new plans, the discovery of ways of operating which need to be different from those of social agencies. Chapters encounter often in its acute form the problem of members who are inactive, of those who feel the present leadership is trying to keep the reins, and of those who want to participate but do not know how.

What are those shortcomings which interfere with accomplishing the work there is to be done? What are we doing to get beyond some of them?

Development in size of chapters has not been as marked as development in the strategic nature of their role and the consequent urgency upon them to improve their organization and equipment for effective functioning. Stability of administration and continuity of program are being advanced by longer terms for officers and overlapping

terms for committee memberships. More adequate means for keeping year to year records are reducing the loss to chapters of access to their own previous experience. The questioning of meeting schedules and customs is resulting in improved devices for satisfying members' needs.

The lack of long experience of the purpose and function of a professional association in social work has complicated the chapter's problem of finding its own direction and using its resources to the best advantage. There has been an inevitable confusion about the chapter's difference from other kinds of organizations—councils, unions, social workers' clubs, or conferences. Vagueness about the basis for professional organization and program has hampered the chapter in applying tests of direction to its many relationships and responsibilities and to conflicts of opinion within the membership.

A clearer understanding of the Association's purposes will be helpful to chapters. There is still the need of experience as to how stated purposes apply to issues as they arise, to the choice of leadership which will promote the accepted purpose most effectively, to the selection of the program out of various possibilities and to establishing an appropriate basis for greater participation and more efficient action by the membership.

Another burden with which the chapter struggles is that of the national organization and the difficulty which the national has in making its program real and meaningful to members. Dues to the national are constant irritating reminders of the dual membership, national as well as chapter, and of the extent to which the national organization remains remote and obscure. It is true that the national has from the start promoted and given official recognition to chapters and that within the last five years chapters have gained new strength through the joint dues collection, that they have acquired a new voice in the affairs of the Association through their delegate votes and that their inter-communications have been improved. There still remains much to be done in easing the burden which falls on the chapter administration to explain and justify a national organization the services of which the chapter's members can neither see nor feel.

The theory of the necessity for a national organization in the promotion of a professional purpose and function is simple and all the arguments for local collaboration in a chapter apply even more strongly to the collaboration of chapters in an enterprise that must conceive of social work needs, standards and goals as essentially the same wherever there are clients and persons in social work positions for serving them. The use of national resources to make the theory work has been experimental and changing. There is evidence that more study should be given to the function of national committees and to ways in which their work can be more closely related to the interests and problems with which chapters are engaged. National bodies have been thought of and developed as channels for communication rather than for representation since the limitations in their size would necessarily hamper their achieving any strictly representative function. It is, however, apparent that more work must be done to make national committees serve in the enrichment of our fund of knowledge, in its freer circulation, and its preservation as a basis for future professional growth.

Social work exists where it is practised. It is a service to persons where they are. To be real a national effort must find its source in social work practice and its own specific contribution is not effective until it is locally absorbed and employed. This principle, developed from the Association's experience, has been embedded in its management policies. As applied to chapters, it means that professional development hangs on their development and their contribution to the national scheme.

The staff has the advantage of seeing the briefed records of an astonishing total of chapter work and initiative. For each chapter, at any time, its program may seem to fall so far short of the need for it as to seem like little progress or near defeat. The great variety of chapter size and organization, of setting and of program is an obstacle to a clear picture of the ferment at work in the Association's professional enterprise. Nevertheless the picture is unmistakably one of social work as a profession which is under way.